

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Letter Responding to Invitation to Attend "Just Plain English"
at Old Executive Office Building

FROM:

MATD/OTE
Room 516 C of C

EXTENSION

NO.

DD/A Registry

DATE

83-1174/1

STAT

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S
INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1. EO/DDA
Room 7D18 Hqs.

11 MAY 1983

11 MAY 1983

JH

1- F-12

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DD/A REGISTRY
FILE: 18-1

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

DD/A Registry
83-117971

10 May 1983

Mr. Robert Hill
Room 94
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20006

Dear Mr. Hill:

In accordance with our telephone conversation of this date, I am pleased to forward to you the names of those Agency employees who plan to attend the presentation of "Just Plain English," by Lt. Col. Tom Murawski.

For the 19 May presentation, we should like to send

On 20 May, the attendants will be

STAT
STAT
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Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to participate.

STAT

Chief, Communications Training Branch
Office of Training and Education

cc: Executive Registry
O/DDA

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Routing Slip

TO:		ACTION	INFO	DATE	INITIAL
1	DCI				
2	DDCI				
3	EXDIR				
4	D/ICS				
5	DDI				
6	DDA	✓			
7	DDO				
8	DDS&T				
9	Chm/NIC				
10	GC				
11	IG				
12	Compt				
13	D/EEO				
14	D/Pers				
15	D/OEA				
16	C/PAD/OEA				
17	SA/IA				
18	AO/DCI				
19	C/IPD/OIS				
20					
21					
22					

SUSPENSE

Date

Remarks:

Per my conversation w/

5/4/83
Date

ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

Date

5 MAY 1983

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number, building, Agency/Post)

Initials

Date

1. D/Training & Education

2.

3.

4.

5.

Action	File	Note and Return
Approval	For Clearance	Per Conversation
As Requested	For Correction	Prepare Reply
Circulate	For Your Information	See Me
Comment	Investigate	Signature
Coordination	Justify	

REMARKS

FILE: 18-1

A REGISTRY

See my phone conversation

IMMEDIATE
STAT

STAT

DD/A Registry
83-179DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, dispcSTAT
clearances, and similar actions

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)

Room No.—Bldg.

EO/DDA

STAT

7D-18 Hqs.,

Phone No.

STAT

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Executive Registry
83-2369
DD/A Registry
83-1179

May 3, 1983

TO: Agency Heads

FROM: Craig L. Fuller

Your representatives are cordially invited to participate with the White House staff in Just Plain English, a short program on better writing. We've reserved three seats for your agency at each of two presentations.

This is an opportunity to preview a promising program. The instructor, Air Force Lt. Colonel Tom Murawski, focuses on practical ways to make writing clear, complete, concise, and convincing. His approach is lively as well as informative. It has been well received by the 15,000 government employees who have participated in the past year.

The program will be presented in the theater of the Old Executive Office Building Room 450 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on May 19 and repeated on May 20. Your representatives should reach the guard desk at the 17th Street entrance half an hour early.

So we can arrange for passes, please send the names and titles of each day's participants to Bob Hill, Room 94, 456-7610. He needs the information by May 12.

Enclosure; AP news article

83-1179

DCI
EXEC
REG

Colonel's last stand on English

Witty prof teaches bureaucrats to fight the enemy — bad writing

WASHINGTON (AP) — "Cut it off at the knees," Lt. Col. Tom Murawski mercilessly urges his students.

"Let it die," he counsels.

The colonel is on a search-and-destroy mission to get rid of the enemy — bad English in government writing.

Murawski, an English professor at the Air Force Academy in Colorado who is on a sabbatical, took his fight to the Commerce Department recently, leading some 1,600 employees through a 4½-hour seminar on how to improve their letters.

"You know I'm roving trouble," he told the packed auditorium of Commerce employees as he opened his "Just Plain English" course, which is liberally laced with one-liners and puns.

Murawski used examples of government letters and memos to show his students how to write better. His message: Be compact, natural and to the point.

He flashed examples of poor government writing on a screen:

"Too frequently," read one Commerce Department memo, "inadequate procurement planning, and program pressures to get a job done as quickly as possible, place procurement officials in a position whereby it is not possible for them

to realistically meet the objective of obtaining competition to the maximum extent practicable."

Armed with a red pen, he ruthlessly slashed through the memo, cutting the 42-word sentence in half. The result: "Too frequently, inadequate procurement planning and pressures to get a job done fast prevent procurement officials from obtaining the most competition."

He railed against the word "practicable," calling it a "blight upon the land." He had never seen the word in letters until he came to Washington. "Let it die," he said.

He turned the sentence, "I want you to know that I am a strong advocate of competition," into: "I strongly advocate competition."

He struck from a letter: "I sincerely appreciate your efforts in helping me to meet this extremely important objective." It's not needed, he said.

Avoid "wimpy writing," he urged. Open a letter; "socko." Readers want to know what's in it for them.

"Less is almost always better," he concluded.

A booklet given each employee spells out more ways to write better.

Readable writing, it says, sounds like people talking to each other.

Use everyday words, contraction; and short sentences.

Stay away from legislative jargon and negative words. Avoid "it is" and "there is" constructions.

Murawski, a graduate of the Air Force Academy who holds a doctorate in English from the University of the Pacific in California, believes "a government of democracy should speak in democratic tones."

In the past six years, he's taken his message to thousands of people in the military, holding seminars both in the United States and overseas.

The Commerce Department sessions were the first of that size held outside the Defense Department.

Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige — who's become the Reagan administration's English maven — heard about the course and asked Murawski for his help.

Employees initially were reluctant to attend the sessions, officials said. But after word spread that the colonel livens up his teaching with humor, the seminars drew standing-room-only crowds and he's been asked to return for more sessions.

Murawski expects people to fear the worst when they enter "the church of clear writing." So he uses humor to get his point across.

"I just pull out the the stops," he said. "I can't make people improve directly. You have to go at it in roundabout ways. Telling people to write well is like telling them to be good."

His message seemed to get through.

"I love it," said Richard Meyers, a Commerce Department compliance officer. "Professors like this are hard to come by."

But did he learn anything?

"Oh, yeah," he responded, saying he planned to retrieve some just-finished work from a supervisor to spruce it up a bit more.

A2 Los Angeles Herald Examiner, Monday, April 4, 1983

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

The Honorable William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505



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STOP